

ANIMALS FIJI

Might Your Animal Have Mites? All About Managing Mange



Opinion

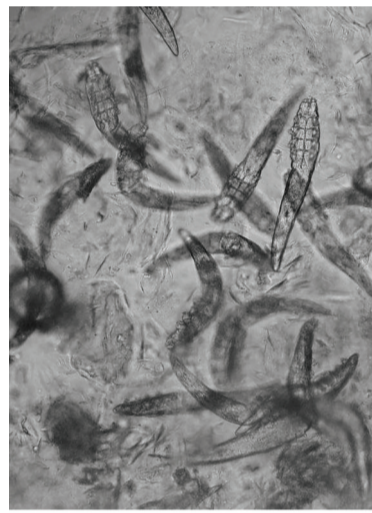
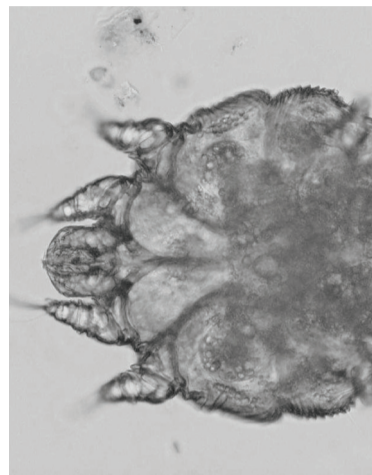


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Fiji Northern Division roaming dog afflicted with mange. Inset: Sarcoptes scabiei mite and Demodex canis mite.



must read

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As a non-profit charity, Animals Fiji depends on the kindness of donations to continue in their work to support animals across Fiji.

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small red bumps.

How does a dog get mange?

One of the ways is by your dog playing or being with other dogs. Mites are highly contagious, especially the ones that cause sarcoptic mange and cheyletiellosis mange, which can quickly transfer from one dog to another.

Not all dogs with sarcoptic mange show symptoms, so it is hard to tell which dog might have the mite and which should be separated from your uninfested dog.

Demodectic mange is unrelated to bad living conditions but lives harmlessly in almost all dogs' skin. Puppies will certainly have this mite living on their skin. It is only when the puppy is unwell that this mite becomes a real problem.

Indirect contact can also spread mange. Sharing brushes, bedding, and toys between dogs can spread the mites.

For example, mites that cause sarcoptes mange and cheyletiellosis mange will survive for a short time off the dog, so using the same brush on a different dog can infest the uninfested dog.

How is mange treated?

By taking skin scrapings, your veterinary clinic staff can tell what type of mange is present and how to treat it.

Most of the time, treatment will involve a medicated shampoo bath and or a topical or oral medication that kills the mites.

It is a manageable disease to treat. Because the mites lay their eggs under the skin, treatments might need to continue to kill any hatching mite eggs.

You may also want to clip your dog's hair if it is long so that the treatment is more effective.

It is essential to disinfect or replace the dog's bedding, collar, brushes and other items they come in contact with, especially if you have other animals that don't have mange.

For fabric items, wash them with bleach or borax and dry them at a high heat. For hard objects and surfaces, use a disinfectant spray or white vinegar to wipe down thoroughly.

Summary

Mange is an easily treatable problem if it is detected early.

Be aware of excessive scratching by your animal, especially if it is associated with skin damage and hair loss.

Source: Animals Fiji

While fleas are one of the most common reasons an animal has itchy skin, mange is the next most common reason. Mange is an infectious skin disease caused by mites that infest the skin or hair follicles of animals.

Mites are related to ticks and spiders, but you need a strong magnifying glass or microscope to see them living on a dog's skin and hair. Mange can affect dogs, cats and other animals, such as pigs, goats, cows and horses.

Animals with mange usually rub frequently on objects to scratch the itchy area.

If not treated, scratching or rubbing the itch can lead to hair loss, open wounds, infections, and even skin disease.

It is important that if you see your animal itching, scratching, or rubbing excessively, take your animal to the vet as soon as possible before it becomes a significant problem.

This article is about managing mange in dogs, but the information can be generally applied to other animals.

Although management is similar between the mites that infest different animals, each animal has a different species or variety of mite that is adapted to that animal.

Mange in Dogs

Mange in dogs happens when too many mites grow on their skin. The mites can multiply and injure the animal.

This happens especially when the dog's immune system is weak or not functioning well, or is in poor health, and usually in younger or older dogs.

Different types of mange affect different animals. These are the types that can infest your dog.

■ Sarcoptic mange: This is the itchiest type caused by the highly contagious *Sarcoptes scabiei* mite. The mites bur-

row into the animal's skin, causing intense itching and inflammation. The itching and inflammation lead to hair loss and red, crusty sores. If not treated, it can worsen and spread.

These mites can also live for days outside of the dog, which makes it easy to spread to other animals or even humans in contact with them.

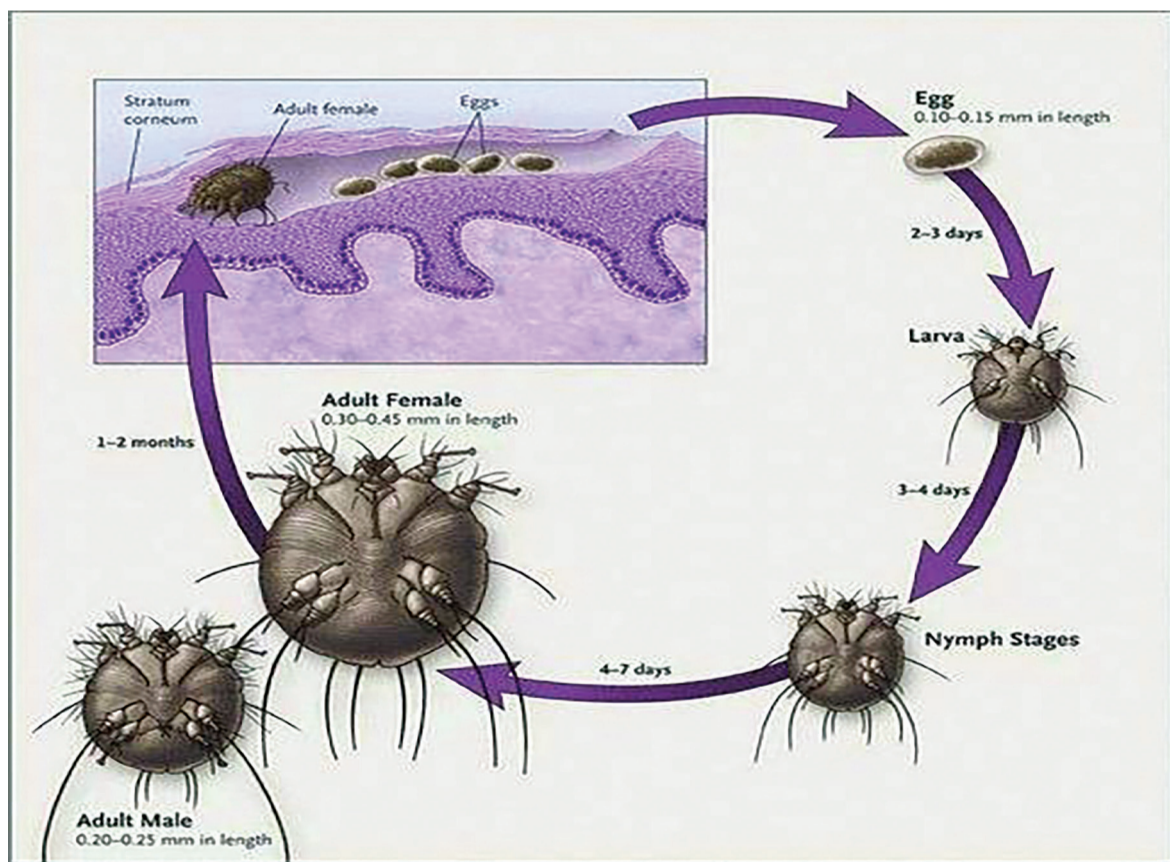
Humans are not natural hosts, so while the mites can cause severe itching, they cannot complete their life cycle in human skin so only lasts for a few weeks.

It is important to treat this type of mite straight away before it spreads.

■ Demodectic mange: This is a less aggressive type of mange and is more commonly seen in young dogs. It is also known as red mange or puppy mange. These *Demodex canis* mites are usually harmless, but if a puppy has a weak immune system, the mites can cause skin problems. Puppies get these mites from their mother when they are very young. Signs that they have mites are patches of hair loss,

red skin, and itchiness. Unlike some mites, these only live on the dog and nowhere else. Having a clean house or excluding other dogs does not stop a puppy from getting this type of mange – any puppy can get it no matter how clean their home is.

■ Cheyletiellosis mange: This is a rare type of mange caused by a *Cheyletiella* mite that moves beneath the skin, making it flake a little, which makes the symptoms look like dandruff. Signs include a messy coat, hair loss and



Life cycle of Sarcoptes scabiei mite.